

## *New Research Information*

### **Exercise**

#### **Tai Chi May Help Parkinson's Patients**

The study compared 3 groups of PD patients, those receiving Tai Chi training, resistance training or stretching. Compared to the other two groups, the group who practiced Tai Chi, (which is a gentle physical exercise that involves slow, graceful movements), had more improvement in their balance and walking ability.

[N Engl J Med](#). 2012 Feb 9;366(6):511-9.

### **Vitamin D**

In a study of variation in walking stride, it was noted that a sample of older adults with low levels of vitamin D had more variation, and thus less gait control.

[Neurology](#). 2011 May 10;76(19):1617-22.  
Epub 2011 Apr 6.

Another study reviewed and combined the results of 26 other studies that looked at vitamin D use and risk of falls and concluded that vitamin D combined with calcium reduced the risk of falls.

[J Clin Endocrinol Metab](#). 2011  
Oct;96(10):2997-3006. Epub 2011 Jul  
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Neither of these vitamin studies was done specifically with Parkinson's disease patients, but other studies have found that vitamin D deficiency is common in Parkinson's disease patients.

## *Sources for more information*

### **Parkinson's disease and fall prevention**

Falls Prevention Workbook—141 pages  
<http://www.parkinson.org/NationalParkinsonFoundation/files/e7/e724e004-ab48-4a08-84ab-b8506bf77600.pdf>

Understanding Parkinson's: Falls Prevention  
[http://www.pdf.org/pdf/fs\\_falls\\_prevention\\_10.pdf](http://www.pdf.org/pdf/fs_falls_prevention_10.pdf)

### **General information on preventing falls**

Preventing Falls – Helping your loved one become more independent-  
By RESCUE-Resources & Education for Stroke Caregivers' Understanding and Empowerment  
<http://www.rorc.research.va.gov/rescue/docs/independent-living/preventing-falls.pdf>

Fall Prevention: 6 tips to prevent falls  
By Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (MFMER).  
<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/fall-prevention/HQ00657>

Check for Safety- A Home Fall Prevention Checklist for Older Adults  
By CDC –Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
[http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/booklet\\_Eng\\_desktop-a.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/HomeandRecreationalSafety/pubs/English/booklet_Eng_desktop-a.pdf)

**Parkinson's Disease Research Education  
and Clinical Centers (PADRECC)**  
[www.parkinsons.va.gov](http://www.parkinsons.va.gov)

Parkinson's Disease Research Education & Clinical Centers

## **PARKINSON'S DISEASE**



## **Fall Prevention**



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## *Medical Support*

- Follow up closely with your medical team to fine tune your medications to improve your 'on' time.
- Let your doctor know about all your medications, including over the counter drugs and supplements. Some medications can interact with each other and make you groggy or dizzy.
- Your doctor can prescribe safety devices, such as grab bars and raised toilet seats, assistive devices for ambulation such as special canes and walkers that may improve your stability and prevent falls.
- Your doctor can prescribe physical and occupational therapy sessions to help you regain strength, improve posture and to train you in the proper use of assistive devices.
- Have your vision checked and corrected at least once a year. Avoid the use of bifocals or trifocals while walking. A separate pair of glasses for distance vision can be used at that time.
- Request to be screened for peripheral neuropathy, a condition that causes numbness in the feet along with poor balance.
- Have your vitamin D levels checked, especially if you have infrequent exposure to sunlight. Deficiency of vitamin D has been associated with increased weakness and falls.

## *Household Safety*

- Avoid clutter - throw rugs, decorative items, furniture, etc.
- Do not use electric or telephone cords in walking areas/hallways.
- Use grab bars in the bathroom and non-skid tub mats or adhesive strips in the bath tub.
- Have a bath bench available to use in the bathtub or shower area.
- Have hand rails on both sides of a stairway or along one wall of long hallways.
- For stairways, have a light switch both at the top and bottom ends.
- Mark the edges of the steps for easy visibility.
- Lamps and light switches should be easily accessible, especially without having to get up from a chair or a bed to reach them.
- To avoid the need for reaching and stooping, keep items you use frequently, (such as kitchen utensils) at waist level.
- Have a rolling cart in the kitchen to help you carry items from the counter to the table.
- Have your bed at a height that you can get up from easily, but not so high that your feet are off the floor when sitting on it.
- Use night lights, especially if you need to get up at night.
- Hallways should be well lit and floors should have non-skid surfaces.

## *Self- Help*

- Try to take your medications on time.
- Taking Levodopa at least 30 minutes before having a protein meal will usually help you achieve a better effect with your medication.
- Drink water liberally to avoid becoming dehydrated.
- When you are standing, try to keep your feet approximately shoulder width apart to maintain balance.
- Use stretching exercises to stay limber and resistance exercises to increase your strength.
- Therapeutic Qi Gong and Tai Chi are ancient Chinese exercises that improve balance. Look for fitness centers or support groups that offer these classes.
- Change positions slowly from lying to sitting or sitting to standing.
- Try to avoid carrying objects using both hands so one hand remains free.
- Eat a healthy diet and get adequate sleep to be at your best.
- Use your prescribed walking aids regularly
- Wear appropriately fitting shoes with non-skid soles.
- When frozen, picture a line or spot on the floor and imagine stepping over it to unfreeze.